

Guidelines for the Slaughter of Animals for Human Consumption

Article 1

General principles for slaughter

After second paragraph (before section on “Personnel”):

Proposed text:

In the performance of ritual slaughter it is recognized that religious requirements in some cases may not permit complete compliance with the principles outlined in these guidelines. Such deviations do not necessarily detract from the humaneness of the ritual slaughter. In several countries, in fact, some forms of ritual slaughter, and pre-slaughter procedures, have been legislatively determined to be humane. In others, the principles of religious freedom have exempted ritual slaughter, and pre-slaughter procedures, from certain animal welfare requirements. These guidelines are in no way intended to preempt those laws and considerations, and should be understood in their national context.

Rationale:

Religious freedom is a fundamental human right, as recognized by international charters and, in many cases, national constitutions, laws and policies. While animal welfare is a desired ideal, it should not be used to trample on the religious rights of communities that adhere to sincerely held religious beliefs and ancient ritual requirements, especially when protected by domestic law.

Article 2

Moving and handling animals

Third and fourth bullets in first section:

Proposed text:

- The use of force on animals that have little or no room to move should not occur, **unless such use is intended to properly position the animal in the restraining pen for slaughter.**
- The use of instruments which administer electric shocks (e.g. goads and prods) and their power output should be restricted to that necessary to assist movement of the animals. If such use is necessary, it should be limited to the hindquarters of pigs and large ruminants, and never on sensitive areas such as the eyes, mouth, ears, anogenital region or belly. Such instruments should not be used on horses, sheep and goats of any age, or on calves or piglets. **Nor should such instruments be used on** animals that have little

or no room to move, unless such use is intended to properly position the animal in the restraining pen for slaughter.

Rationale:

In order to perform a ritually acceptable cut, Jewish religious law requires that there be a firm restraint on an animal that is ready for slaughter. Typically, therefore, the restraining pen has little or no room to move. Thus, the problem of properly positioning an animal in such close quarters is often best solved by using some degree of force or instruments – for example, to get the animal to “jump into position.” In these circumstances, the action does not undermine animal welfare. Rather, the purpose is to hasten and improve the quality of the slaughter process.

Position relevant to restraining and containing animals

Second, sixth and eighth bullets in this section:

Proposed text:

- Avoidance of excessive pressure applied by restraining equipment that causes struggling or vocalization in animals. In the context of ritual slaughter, it is recognized that struggling or vocalization may occur after the animal in the restraining pen is positioned to enter the head gate, due to the need to situate the animal in a manner that ensures a ritually acceptable cut.
- Suspending or hoisting animals (other than poultry, calves and sheep) by the feet or legs, except, in cases involving ritual slaughter, where such means of restraint may be necessary to ensure a ritually valid cut.
- Mechanical clamping of an animal’s legs or feet (other than shackles used in poultry, calves, sheep and ostriches) as the sole method of restraint, except, in cases involving ritual slaughter, where such means of restraint may be necessary to ensure a ritually valid cut.

Rationale:

In kosher dietary laws, the ritual cut must be swift and precise. The positioning of the animal is integral to carrying out this requirement properly and may result in struggling and vocalization after the animal is positioned to enter the head gate. In addition, this requires animals to be adequately restrained and immobilized. With certain animals – e.g. calves and sheep – many kosher certifiers feel that restraint by hoisting or clamping provides them better control and best ensures a ritually valid cut.

ARTICLE 6

Summary of acceptable handling and restraining methods (chart)

In the various categories under “restraining methods,” where “specific purpose” includes “slaughter without stunning,” and “AW concerns/implications” emphasize “excessive pressure” and “stress of restraint,” add the following language in the “Key requirements” box:

Proposed text:

In ritual slaughter plants, religious certifiers should be given deference as to the appropriate level of restraint or pressure – applied by either equipment or handlers – necessary to adhere to the requirements of religious law.

Rationale:

As noted above, Jewish slaughter laws require firm restraint to ensure a valid ritual cut. There is no objective standard given in the guidelines for what is considered “excessive” pressure or stress, and that determination will consequently be left to every inspector’s whim. This language will make clear that, in regard to ritual slaughter, the degree of acceptable pressure must be adequate to ensure that religious requirements are met, as determined by the religious certifier of the product.

ARTICLE 7

Stunning Methods

Stunning

Add a final paragraph to the Stunning section, before “Mechanical stunning” section begins:

Proposed text:

It should be noted that the dietary laws of some faiths do not allow stunning prior to slaughter. In some countries, consequently, ritual slaughter is exempt from any stunning requirement. Nothing in these guidelines requires stunning to be performed on animals prior to ritual slaughter.

Rationale:

The guidelines discuss stunning at length and in great detail, and might convey the misimpression that stunning is being established as an animal welfare requirement. The guidelines contain no such requirement and the proposed text would clarify that, in the ritual of some faiths, stunning is actually prohibited.

ARTICLE 8

Summary of acceptable stunning methods (chart)

In the “Comments” box in every category:

Proposed text:

This method is not suitable for Kosher under any circumstances for relevant species.

Rationale:

The comments already address the issue of stunning methods and Halal. They should also address their applicability to Kosher, especially in light of the fact that Kosher and Halal apparently do not share the same approach. According to the comments, a stunning procedure may render the carcass unsuitable for Halal – where death occurred from cardiac arrest. According to Jewish law, any method of mechanical, electrical or gaseous stunning renders the carcass non-kosher in all circumstances – whether or not it can be shown that death resulted from cardiac arrest.

ARTICLE 9

Summary of acceptable slaughter methods (chart)

Category line – Bleeding out by severance of blood vessels in the neck without stunning:

Proposed text:

Under “Key requirements” – A very sharp blade or knife, of sufficient length so that the point of the knife remains outside the incision during the cut; the point of the knife should not be used to make the incision. An incision which does not close over the knife during the throat cut. **In the context of ritual slaughter, no requirement may be imposed that would in any way violate ritual slaughter laws, as determined by the religious certifier of the product.**

Rationale:

The “comment” correctly points out that this slaughter method is applicable to Kosher and Halal. As such, it is critical that the remedial “key requirements” conform to the relevant ritual laws. For example, the chart indicates that when there is “failure to cut both common carotid arteries” then a “key requirement “ to address this animal welfare concern would be to use a “very sharp blade or knife, of sufficient length so that the point of the knife remains outside the incision during the cut.” Perhaps this is a solution for Halal. However, such a solution would run afoul of Kosher. It is, therefore, imperative that remedies are found that are acceptable under the particular ritual laws involved, and the only one qualified to make that determination is the religious certifier.